

# The Independent

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## THE INDEPENDENT

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## PEARL HARBOR.

The History of its Acquisition.

ITS LOCATION, APPEARANCE, AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

An Unorthodox View by a Student.

EDITOR INDEPENDENT:

Allow me space in your columns to publish an essay on Pearl Harbor which probably will seem very unorthodox and which in many ways differs in opinions and views from the well-established doctrine that the salvation of Hawaii lies in the cession of Pearl Harbor to the United States, and that the salvation of the United States lies in the possession of Pearl Harbor. I write at some length because I do not alone desire to convince you, Mr. Editor, but also the great numbers unacquainted with the harbor, of its uselessness to Uncle Sam as a naval station or as anything else. Thanking you in advance for the space you allow I remain yours against annexation.

STUDENT.

When, in the year 1886, while the treaty extending the alleged "Reciprocity" Treaty of 1874, between the United States and Hawaii, was under consideration in the United States Senate, Senator Edmunds secured the interpolation into its text, of an article providing for the cession by Hawaii to the United States, of the exclusive privilege of entering Pearl Harbor with its ships of war, and there establishing coaling and repair stations for the navy of the latter, he did an act whose consequences are not yet fully unfolded. That was a shrewd piece of strategy on the part of the Vermont Senator, and one which did not at all appeal to, or comfort the Cleveland administration of the day, as the writer hereof has ample means of knowing. But it rendered possible by the diversity of sentiment in the Senate, as to the renewal or extension of the then all but lapsed treaty, upon any terms; and the scale seems to have been turned in favor of such extension by throwing in that large sized bunch of national policy, of indefinite weight, but then supposed, by those who knew where Pearl Harbor was located, to represent a decisive strategic advantage to the United States.

As negotiated by President Cleveland's Secretary of State, Mr. Bayard, the new treaty was a very brief and unexceptional document, and merely extended, in terms, the then existing treaty, for a period of seven years from the date of the exchange of the ratifications therein provided for. The old treaty, as already stated, had then all but lapsed. Indeed, it was enjoying a most precarious tenure of life, for its stated term of seven years had long ago expired, and it was subject to abrogation upon twelve months' notice from either of the contracting powers. It was merely a tenant at sufferance in the American Treasury, liable to be served with notice to quit any day, and with a numerous and influential contingent in the Senate clamoring for the immediate service of such notice as would extinguish it, and would relegate Hawaii, that pauper pensioner upon the funds of Uncle Sam, to a position of self-dependence. It was felt, and most reasonably so,

that the treaty in question, which admitted Hawaiian sugar and rice to American ports duty free, in the face of a general duty of about two cents per pound upon those commodities, was nothing more or less than a bonus of so much money paid by the American tax-payers to the so-called "Hawaiian" planters, — under which innocent and convenient descriptive appellation were included planters of every nationality from China to Sweden, in an eastward course.

But when the document, submitted by the President to the Senate, came from that body with an amendment embodied in its text which completely changed its purport by calling for a cession by one to the other of the parties of a supposedly highly valuable but indefinite territorial advantage, it metaphorically knocked both the "high contracting parties," as represented by the Executive of either Power, still higher. President Cleveland pouted and sulked, as well he might, to see his little commercial contract transmogrified into a treaty of territorial accession by the Senate, whose sole function in the premises, was supposed to consist in either approving or rejecting the instrument submitted to it, without amendment or alteration. So much disposed was Mr. Cleveland to resent this unexampled invasion of the Executive domain, that his Secretary of State actually notified the Hawaiian Minister at Washington, that the President did not regard the treaty, as negotiated and agreed upon by the diplomats and as submitted by him to the Senate, as having been approved by the latter body in such manner as the constitution contemplated, nor so as to make it incumbent upon the President to proceed with the exchange of ratifications.

But, if the effect of the Senatorial aberration referred to was sullenness in the White House, it was consternation in Iolani Palace in Honolulu and in the halls of the sugar barons throughout this group. The administration of Prime Minister Gibson, though wont to flout the barons aforesaid upon all minor matters and occasions, seemed to realize that they must, in spite of the baronial opposition to and abuse of their general policy, so far mollify the barons on the treaty questions as to keep secure their grasp upon the United States treasury. Mr. Gibson was a shrewd old fox in matters political. He had taken the measure of the barons, and of their patriotic pretensions, and he knew that, while left to feed undisturbed upon the dividend pie for which they have shown such a relish, no real danger lurked behind their political moonings. Consequently, it was deemed of vital importance to Mr. Gibson's administration that the treaty should be extended upon some terms; but those proposed by the Senate, involving as they did a cession of territory and of course of sovereignty, would expose that administration, if accepted, to a new danger from its erstwhile supporters, the Hawaiian people, — who swore wild oaths against anyone who should sign away an inch of their territory.

And so it came to pass that the sulks into which the Edmunds amendment to the text of the treaty had thrown Mr. Cleveland, proved the salvation, for the time being, of the Gibson regime; for, quietly depositing the amended draft of the treaty in a pigeon hole of the State Department, the President set at rest, for a year or more all treaty agitation; the Louisiana senators

retired from the fight against its extension: the barons of Hawaii resumed the task of spending their dividends and clipping their coupons; and until the latter part of 1887 nothing further transpired as to the cession of Pearl Harbor.

In the meantime (June 30, July 1-1887) the first in the series of bloodless revolutions for which Hawaii has become if not famous at least notorious came to pass. Through it Mr. Gibson was forced out of the Government, a so-called Reform Cabinet was placed in office, the constitution was abrogated, and another promulgated in its stead whereby the King was reduced from a personal ruler to a virtual figure head. The sugar barons were in the saddle under the new dispensation, and at once negotiations were re-opened for an extension of the treaty. Mr. Cleveland, meantime, had outgrown the feeling of resentment incident to the Senate's having trodden upon his executive corns, and began to admit the advantage of proceeding to an exchange of ratifications of the treaty. This was accordingly done in November 1887, and so the treaty was given a renewed term of seven years, at the end of which period, in November of last year, and thereafter, either party may abrogate it upon the twelve months' notice to the other.

But the exchange of ratification last referred to was preceded and accompanied by a correspondence between the Hawaiian Government, acting through its Minister at Washington, and the American Secretary of State, Mr. Bayard, wherein was embodied what diplomatic gentlemen are pleased to term a "contemporary construction" of the meaning of the Article in the treaty which cedes to the United States the exclusive rights above referred to. In a few words, the effect of such correspondence was to declare that each of the contracting parties understood and interpreted that article to be coterminous, in point of time, with the rest of the treaty, and that it implied and involved no cession of sovereignty in any part of the ceded waters or territory, by or on the part of the Hawaiian Government to the United States. Just how one nation can cede to another exclusive privileges of occupancy of the territory of the ceding power without a cession or loss of sovereignty, or just how there can be a dual sovereignty in Pearl Harbor, in case it shall ever be occupied as contemplated in the article of the treaty now under discussion, is one of those puzzles which, perhaps, can best be answered by members of the Corps Diplomatic. In the meantime the United States Government through its naval officers on this station has been acting as though it intended to avail itself of the grant in question; and the balance of this article will be devoted to a description of the subject of the grant, its physical features, and other matters pertinent to an understanding of the situation in the world-famous Pearl Lochs.

To be continued

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